

Who Really Walks to Lunch Anymore?

-

Smart Growth
Smart Energy

Boston, MA
Dec. 2008



Downtown Bridgewater, MA

**Or, who bikes to the
convention center?**



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Three quick points:

- Understand the **public health need** for active community settings.
- Recognize the **four elements** of more **active communities** and tools to create them.
- Discuss **common challenges** to designs that are friendly to physical activity.



**Shortcut path to
Bridgewater State College.**

The health preamble in just three numbers:

30 Minutes of daily physical activity recommended by Surgeon General.

25 % of American adults who meet the S.G. recommendation (thru LTPA).

365,000 Estimated annual deaths in America due to physical inactivity & poor nutrition. (2nd only to tobacco.)

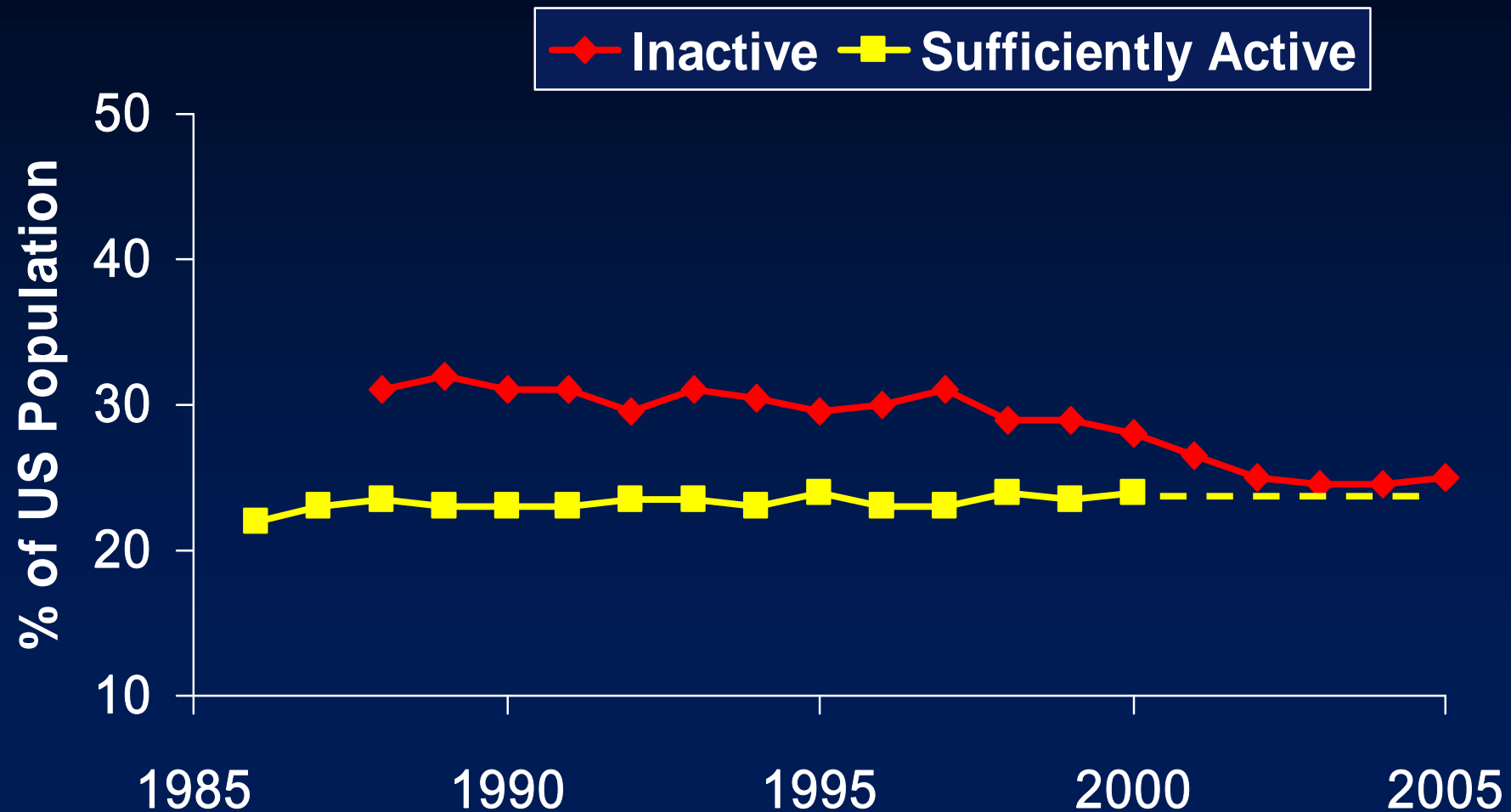
Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity & Health, 1996

- **30 minutes** of moderately vigorous **physical activity**.
- Most (all) days of the week.
- **Can be broken up.**
- Reduced risk for CVD, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, dementia in old age, clinical depression, a growing list of cancers.



Leisure Time Physical Activity in the US

(MMWR: 50(09), 166-9; 54(39), 991-4)



**Necessary and
important,
but not enough. >**



**< We must build
communities
where people are
intrinsically
more active.**



Four questions define active living settings:

- Destinations within walk & bike distance?
- Sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, crossings?
- Inviting settings for bikes & pedestrians?
- Is it safe & accessible?



Or in planner-speak:

- Land use mix.
- Network of bike & pedestrian facilities.
- Site design & details.
- Safety & access.



Inviting designs?



Land use.



Schools, civic anchors *in town*.

Post office . . .



Lowell H.S.

Compact neighborhoods
& shared open space.



Housing
above
retail
below.



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**In other words, create & sustain
village centers.**

**Mixed use: keep where
we live, work, learn,
play, shop, pray . . .
closer together!**



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Network encourages active travel with:

Cambridge



Ten Mile River Trail

- Presence of sidewalks, trails.
- Shorter blocks, cul-de-sac cut-throughs, more intersections.
- Access to trail, park, greenway, *transit*.



Site design:



Anywhere USA

Where would you be
more comfortable
shopping on foot or
by bike?



Alexandria VA

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Site design?

Research &
practice suggest:



- Pedestrian friendly access; buildings are near the sidewalk, not set back.
- Trees, benches, water, aesthetics, lighting, scale.
- Details: bike parking, open space, plantings, materials.





Do you
recognize
this
retailer?



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Improving “set-back” sites.

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Safety.

- Engineering can dramatically improve safety.
- Increasing pedestrian and bike trips *decreases* overall accident & fatality rates.



(Jacobsen P, *Injury Prevention*, 2003; 9:205-209.

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**Use vertical traffic
calming very
selectively . . .**

**Accommodating a cyclist
in a school zone.**



In a parking lot.



At UNC-A

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All the “health” benefits: **Education, schools**

Environmental

- Reduced traffic; air, water, & noise pollution.
- Conserved open space, agricultural land.



Safety

- Kids, elderly mobility.
- Crime deterrent.



- Increased safety.
- Reduced transportation costs and infrastructure.
- More community engagement; schools as neighborhood centers.

Social

- Equitable transportation.
- More personal connections.

Economic:

- Residents shop locally; more stable tax base.
- Healthy employees, low turnover, happy employers.
- Healthy housing values (NAHB & NAR surveys).



Marshaltown, IA



Or more simply:
◀ Which generates more tax revenue in the *long run*? ^

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Pitfalls to Avoid in Creating More Walkable Places.

Death by Parking

Appleton WI



Neenah WI



Portland OR



Tools & incentives:

- Decrease & share parking; maxima?
- Density bonuses.
- Mixed-use, multi-story (overlay?)
- Expedite permits.

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Parking principles: *

- Invest in alternatives first.
- Adopt pricing strategies (\$15-\$20K/space/year!)
- Reinvest the \$ locally.
- Get sophisticated: Shared parking, no minimums, better user information & designs!



West Chester, PA



Wichita, KS

*** May 2006 & 2008,
Planning magazine
(see Donald Shoup)**

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Diagonal parking increases capacity, but . . .



Reverse Angle:
Fewer collisions
& less severe.
Safer for cyclists.
Pedestrians off of
the street.

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Death by Design Details





Death by Abutter

**The hole in the fence
suggests unmet
demand for a local
pedestrian pathway!**



Other forms of unseemly demise:

- **Death by Acronym:** “We can’t do it because MUTCD, AASHTO, etc. says so . . .”
- **Death by Dollars:** Banks are often unwilling to lend to projects that depart from set, very familiar, formulae: Set back building, 5 (7?) parking spaces/1000 sq.ft., etc.
- **Death by Laziness:** It’s usually more work to come up with creative, productive designs.
- **Death by Ignorance:** Who knew?

Pathways forward?

- **Institute Design Review:** Engage before lots of developer \$ are spent. Include landscape design review if possible.
- **Use “educational” public input:** E.g. walkable community workshops designed to teach *before* eliciting input.
- **Carrots & Sticks:** Incentives, because creative, productive designs are more work.
- **Make it the Law:** Build-to lines, pedestrian access, bicycle parking, parking maxima, etc.

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